

VZCZCXRO1558
RR RUEHAO RUEHCD RUEHGA RUEHGD RUEHHA RUEHHO RUEHMC RUEHNG RUEHNL
RUEHQU RUEHRD RUEHRG RUEHRS RUEHTM RUEHVC
DE RUEHBS #0378/01 0711405
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 111405Z MAR 08
FM USEU BRUSSELS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USEU BRUSSELS 000378

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/06/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [XK](#) [XL](#) [XM](#) [UEU](#)
SUBJECT: U.S.-EU TROIKA MEETING ON LATIN AMERICA

BRUSSELS 00000378 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Alyce Tidball, Deputy Political Minister Counselor, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. WHA PDAS Craig Kelly participated in the March 5 U.S.-EU troika meeting on Latin America in Brussels. PDAS Kelly updated participants on the Colombia/Ecuador situation and the EU delegation noted that Colombian VP Santos would be meeting with EU HiRep Solana the evening of March 5. The EU reiterated its commitment to dialogue with Cuba, emphasizing our shared goal of promoting a transition process. Participants agreed the Cuban people would have to recognize the need for transition and decide when and how that would occur, but PDAS Kelly cautioned that pushing for patience could be misconstrued as not welcoming rapid change. The EU is concerned that the Chavez government, while still very popular, is paralyzed by the centralized, authoritarian system that requires all decisions be taken by the President. The EU noted that the continued strong growth of Venezuela's GDP is being undermined by the protective policies of the government, which are weakening the economy. Participants agreed that Brazil should be encouraged to take a leadership role in the region, citing its role in the Colombia/Ecuador crisis and in Haiti. The EU reiterated its commitment to Haiti for the long haul and praised the participation of regional actors in MINUSTAH. Participants also compared notes on the status of EU and U.S. trade agreements in the region. END SUMMARY.

¶2. BRAZIL

(U) Slovenian Presidency Head of Delegation Bogdan Salej praised the Lula government for expanded engagement on international issues, noting that Brazil is establishing embassies in Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Bratislava, and is engaged on regional issues such as Haiti, Cuba, and the recent Colombia/Ecuador crisis, as well as increased activity on African issues. PDAS Kelly confirmed U.S. strategic partnership with Brazil, noting U.S. hope that Brazil could play a constructive role in encouraging fruitful dialogue between the Bolivian government and the opposition. Marie-Anne Coninx, Head of Unit in the European Commission (EC) Latin America Directorate said Brazil's huge economic growth was not very sustainable and it still suffers from huge problems of social inequality and exclusion. Participants agreed on the importance of youth exchange programs such as the U.S. Youth Ambassadors and EU student exchange programs.

¶3. BOLIVIA

(C) PDAS Kelly outlined U.S. concern about the deteriorating situation in Bolivia, noting worrisome indications that the political divisions will become more serious and the democratic space will be reduced. Europe can be helpful in promoting dialogue between the parties and we are also urging

Brazil, Chile, and other neighbors to play an active role. Jose Gomez, Deputy Director for Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean in the French Foreign Ministry, shared EU concern that Bolivia is falling apart and said we must call for moderation from all parts. He opined that the regional powers were also being unreasonable and intractable. PDAS Kelly encouraged the EU to urge their member state Ambassadors in La Paz to urge the Bolivian government to tone down its anti-American rhetoric and especially the highly personalized vitriolic statements against our Ambassador.

14. VENEZUELA

(C) PDAS Kelly emphasized that despite current problems, the U.S. has a strong and long-standing positive relationship with the people of Venezuela. We are concerned that the Chavez policy of increasingly authoritarian rule and inward looking economic development will condemn yet another generation of Venezuelans to poverty since this sort of model will ultimately hurt the most vulnerable. Gomez said the EU shares to a large extent U.S. views on Venezuela. Chavez has strong popular support, but the authoritarian, centralized way he manages the country is worrying and has paralyzed the administration because all decisions are ultimately referred to the President. Although Venezuela's GDP continues to grow, its protective policies have weakened the economy. Following the defeat of his constitutional reform referendum in December, Gomez opined, Chavez may be more prudent in what he pushes and how hard he pushes. The Venezuelan people want a better life, he said, but not necessarily a socialist state. NOTE: Gomez suggested there was no concrete evidence that Chavez provides economic and logistical support to the FARC, but this opinion is likely to be revised following the evidence gathered by Colombia after the attack on the FARC camp in Ecuador. Colombian VP Santos personally briefed HiRep Solana on this evidence in Brussels the evening of 5 March. END NOTE. PDAS Kelly briefed the group on the OAS discussions regarding the Ecuador/Colombia border crisis.

15. ASSOCIATION AGREEMENTS

BRUSSELS 00000378 002.2 OF 003

(U) Coninsx reported that the EU economic relationship with Latin America has increased, along with its policy dialogue. The EU is currently negotiating association agreements with Central America and the Andean Community. These agreements follow a three pillar approach: political dialogue, cooperation, and trade. The EU has the strong impression that the negotiations are helping bring the regions together and the EU has made it clear that it will negotiate only these regional agreements, no bilateral agreements. The next Andean Community negotiation, in April, will take place in Quito. The next round on the Central America agreement will take place in El Salvador. The EU-LAC Lima Summit in May will take stock of progress with the hope of concluding both agreements in 2009. Undocumented migration is one of the main difficulties in negotiations with Latin America and will be a topic for the Lima Summit. The third experts meeting on migration will take place March 10-11 in Brussels. There were at least two million undocumented migrants to Spain alone last year, mostly from Ecuador and Colombia.

16. MARAS

(U) PDAS Kelly briefed participants on U.S. anti-gang efforts, which is being approached regionally through the Merida Initiative. Coninsx welcomed the integrated approach to fighting maras and suggested there was scope for EU-U.S. cooperation on this issue. The EU currently funds programs for prevention of youth delinquency in El Salvador and Guatemala and a justice program in Honduras. Salej suggested this area for cooperation should be emphasized and we should have a specific dialogue on the issue. PDAS Kelly agreed the U.S. would encourage our embassies to share information on best practices in combating gangs.

17. CUBA

(C) Salej opened the luncheon discussion emphasizing that the EU and U.S. are working toward the same goals in Cuba. The EU is trying to help in the transition process, but it is difficult to see when real transition might happen. Some of the Member States have experience in making the transition to democracy and can serve as an example to the Cubans. The EU will continue to work on the transition process and will continue to demand release of political prisoners and respect for human rights. The EU is under pressure from some member states to increase cooperation with Cuba, because they understand the Cuban people need help. Regarding EU cooperation with the U.S. on Cuban policy, Salej insisted that the U.S. should consider the EU as a united Europe and should discuss Cuba policy with all the EU and not just with the member states. The EU, he said, wants efficient results, not just movement without achieving results. PDAS Kelly said it is important to the U.S. to have close contact with the EU on Cuba. The U.S. wants to see a true transition in Cuba, not a succession. He emphasized that no solution would be imposed from the outside and that this is for the Cuban people to decide. We hope, Kelly said, that other countries will encourage the Cuban government to open a dialogue with its own people. Now is the moment to seek that change - release of political prisoners is a good place to start, but it cannot stop there. Kelly asked how the EU would deal with the Cuba issue at the EU-LAC Summit in Lima. Gomez said the EU's messages to Cuba encouraging release of political prisoners and a transition to democracy have already been sent by member states and the Lima Summit will not deal with any specific country.

18. (C) EU Council Advisor on Latin America Nicolas Pascual de la Parte opined that most Cubans think a better life can be achieved within the current regime and it will take a while before they realize that this is not possible. The regime, however, realizes it is running out of time and will try to stay ahead of the Cuban people by making cosmetic changes. We must allow the people to realize that they need to press for change and to turn to us for help. Meanwhile, new leaders will emerge and none of the current dissidents will be relevant in the transition. The opposition is atomized and weak, not able to confront the regime and not able to form a common platform. Gomez emphasized that we must continue to support the dissidents even if they are not very relevant. Commission Head of Unit for the Caribbean John Caloghirou said it is not a foregone conclusion that the current government is a monolithic block. People in the current government believe in different speeds of reform and this is where dialogue is important. He insisted it should be a gradual transition. PDAS Kelly insisted that it is important to speak out in more general terms about the need to move toward democracy. If the Cuban people do not hear the message that we will be there to support a transition they will not know they can count on us. If we all voice this support together it will have more impact. On the other hand, a message of "patience" risks sending the signal to the Cuban people that the outside world is not with them in their

BRUSSELS 00000378 003.2 OF 003

desire for change.

19. (C) Kelly asked EU interlocutors what we could do together to reach out to the Cuban people. Caloghirou noted that the EU still has in place an executive training program through a Spanish University in Cuba, but in general the EU requirement for complete transparency keeps groups from proposing projects in Cuba, because once they are identified as supporters or funders of a project it jeopardizes the project. Pascual de la Parte suggested that cultural programs such as filmmaking could provide opportunities for more contact with the Cuban people if the filmmaking companies insisted on the right to hire people themselves as opposed to only using people identified by the government. PDAS Kelly reiterated that a more public message of support for movement toward democracy, issued in conjunction with others, would give hope to the Cuban people.

HAITI

¶10. (U) Caloghirou reported that the situation in Haiti has evolved and although the security situation is still problematic, it is significantly better. He highlighted the important roles of Brazil and Chile in improving security. He confirmed that the EU will continue to support MINUSTAH and is committed to Haiti for the long haul. Caloghirou emphasized the importance of highlighting to the international community the need to stay committed for as long as it takes.

¶11. (U) MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Slovenian Presidency

Dr. Stefan Bogdan Salej, Minister Plenipotentiary, Special Envoy for Latin America, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Marko Osolnik, First Secretary, Policy Planning and Research Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

EU Council

Karl Buck, Head of Unit for Latin America
Nicolas Pascual de la Parte, Head of UN and Latin America Task Force, EU Council Policy Unit

European Commission

Marie-Anne Coninsx, Head of Unit, Directorate for Latin America
Angel Carro, Head of Unit, Mercosur, Chile
John Caloghirou, Head of Unit for Caribbean and OCTs
Tomas Abadia, Relations with the US and Canada
Valentin Gescher, Relations with the US and Canada
Francisco Fontan, Latin America policy desk officer

France

Jose Gomez, Deputy Director for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

U.S.

WHA PDAS Craig Kelly
USEU Minister Counselor for Political Affairs Laurence Wohlers
USEU Deputy Minister Counselor for Political Affairs Alyce Tidball

This report has been cleared by PDAS Kelly.
Murray

.